

# THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN.

PUBLISHED ONCE A FORTNIGHT.

PRICE ONE DOLLAR, IN ADVANCE.

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN."—LUKE II 14.

VOL. I.]

BROOKLYN, (CONN.) AUGUST 16, 1823.

[No. 14.

THE design of THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN is to promote inquiry and the knowledge of True Religion. Its pages are open to all parties. Nothing is required of Correspondents but to abstain from every thing indecorous.

## ON THE ORTHODOX DISTINCTION OF THE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST.

### Remarks on John xiv. 28.

WHEN the Arians object, that Jesus Christ in various passages, is represented as inferior to his father, the Trinitarians reply, that these passages ought to be understood of Christ as man; but that though Christ be inferior to his Father as man, yet at the same time he has in him a divine nature, by which he is God, blessed forever, with the Father. If they urge for example, this passage of St. John xiv. 28. where Christ says, "The Father is greater than I;" and that of St. Matthew xxiv. 36. where it is said, that "the son does not know the day of judgement," they reply, that it is as man that Jesus Christ says, that the Father is greater than he; that it is as man that he does not know the day of judgement; but that as God, he is equal to his Father, he knows all things, he searches the hearts and reins. These answers do not appear satisfactory to the Arians; they frame various difficulties against them, which merit examination, and which we are going to exhibit to the reader.

1. They say, that in order to apply this answer to the passages which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to the Father, it ought to appear very clearly from scripture, that there are two natures in Christ, one divine, and the other human. But this is what does not appear from the sacred writings. There is not a single passage which obliges us to regard Jesus Christ as the Supreme God. There is nothing, therefore, which authorizes us to make this distinction.

2. One cannot apply this distinction to the passages of Scripture in question, without doing violence to them, without attributing to them a mode of speaking, unknown to all languages, contrary to all rules of language. In effect, by these rules, one may indeed at-

tribute to an whole, what agrees to one of its parts; but one cannot deny of a whole, what agrees to one of the parts which compose it. For example, I can say of a man, that he thinks, and that he is extended; because there is in him something that thinks and that is extended; but I cannot say of a man, he does not think, he is not extended, under pretence that there is in him something that does not think, and something that is not extended. Thus, supposing that Jesus Christ be the Supreme God, he cannot say, that he knows not the day of judgement, as on this supposition he knows it in an infallible manner by his divinity. He cannot say in a general manner, and without any limitation, that this day is unknown to him, without violating truth. The language which they have made Jesus Christ employ, in supposing that he had present to his mind this imaginary distinction, resembles that which I might hold, if, when interrogated by a judge concerning facts which are very well known to me, I should reply, that they were unknown to me, under pretence that my body had no knowledge of them. It is as if when one asked me if I had seen such a person I should answer, no; because when I saw him I had one of my eyes shut, and did not see him with that eye. It is as if one should desire me to write upon some subject, I should reply, that I was not able to write, because my mind could not hold a pen. There is nobody who does not see how absurd such a mode of speaking would be. There is no absurdity a man might not advance, if he were allowed to employ similar reservation. A man might say that he neither eats nor drinks, because his mind properly does not eat nor drink. He might say, that he does not think, that he has not an idea of any one thing, that he remembers nothing, that he cannot reason, because all these operations do not belong to his body. One might say, in speaking of Jesus Christ, that he was not born; that he did not suffer; that he was not crucified; that he did not die; that he was not raised again, nor ascended into heaven, because all this is not true of him with regard to his divinity. We easily see that this would be to institute an egregious



abuse of language ; we ought therefore to be cautious of attributing it to Jesus Christ, in supposing that he adopted this mode of expressing himself, in pretending that he declared to the world his ignorance of the day of judgement, because he knew it not as man, though at the very time, as God, this day was perfectly known to him.

3. This distinction, which they have framed, is incompatible with the ideas which the orthodox espouse of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. If they acknowledge two persons in Jesus Christ, it might perhaps take place ;—they might say, that these two persons in Jesus Christ take their turns in speaking, and that it is the human person that speaks, when, for example, Jesus Christ says that he knew not the day of judgement. But the orthodox do not acknowledge but one sole person in Christ ; that which constitutes his person according to them, is his divine nature ; the human nature of Christ is, with regard to his person, only what *clothes* are in respect to a man who is invested with them. It is therefore always the divinity which speaks in Jesus Christ ; for it is his nature which constitutes his person, which ought to speak ; it is therefore the divinity, according to their system, which was to speak, when they asked Jesus Christ when the day of judgement would happen. Agreeably to their system, therefore, they cannot say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on this occasion.

4. If one examine the passages to which the orthodox apply this distinction, he will find, that it cannot take place. In effect, Jesus Christ is most frequently represented here as the Son of God, that is, according to the system of the orthodox, as God. One cannot therefore say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on these occasions ; for example, in the passage we have already quoted, Jesus Christ says, "As for that day, and that hour, no man knoweth it, not the angels who are in heaven, nor even the Son, but the Father." *No man knows it*, neither the angels, nor even the Son, that is not Christ himself, considered as exalted above the angels, considered as the son of God, as God, according to that system ; one cannot therefore say, that it was as man that Jesus Christ speaks in this passage ; he excludes even this, when he says *no man*. In effect, when the disciples addressed this request to Jesus Christ ; "Tell us when these things shall come to pass ;" they did not merely ask him what he might know of them by lights natural to humanity ; they

addressed themselves to him as the Son of God ; they wished to enjoy a share of that knowledge which Jesus might possess in this regard, in consequence of his intimate union with the Deity. It follows, therefore, that Jesus Christ must be absolutely ignorant of the time of the last Judgement to answer as he did, that there are not in Jesus Christ those two natures which serve for the basis of that distinction they have systematically framed, and that this distinction must be vain and chimerical.

5. Though the mode of speaking, which they attribute to the Scriptures, were not as contrary as it really is to the uniform rules of language, one ought at least to own that it is far from being natural, far from being customary ; that the expressions, which the Scripture employs, would naturally and obviously enough denote, that Jesus Christ does not know all things, that Jesus Christ is not equal to the Father. Now if Jesus Christ was God, is it conceivable that the Scriptures would have chosen to make use of expressions so equivocal ; expressions, which would have a tendency to overthrow a doctrine of this importance, which would put men in imminent danger of being deceived ? What would the orthodox say of a man, who in his discourse, would very frequently declare that Jesus Christ is not eternal ; that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent ; that Jesus Christ does not know all things ; that Jesus Christ did not create the Heavens and the Earth ? It would be in vain for him sometimes to ascribe to Jesus Christ attributes of divinity, he would not fail to pass for a heretic ; they would pretend that if he were thoroughly convinced that Jesus Christ was God, he would talk in a different strain. Why do they not make the same judgement in regard to the Scriptures ? If Jesus Christ was God, would it speak so frequently of him as a man inferior to his Father—as a man who holds every thing at his hands ? The scripture, in using the language of the Unitarians, does it not authorize their principles ? Why blame so heinously in individuals expressions which occasion no trouble when one finds them in Scripture ? Why study to elude by an unnatural distinction, the clear and natural sense which exhibits itself in these passages. They ought at least to grant, that from the reflections which they make to justify these expressions of scripture, which represent Jesus Christ to us as inferior to the Father, they ought I say, to grant, that the Unitarians are authorized in speaking as they do



of Jesus Christ; they will be able to say that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent; that Jesus Christ does not know every thing; that Jesus Christ did not create the Heavens and the Earth. They will follow herein a mode of speaking approved by the orthodox; they will adopt the style of scripture; no one will have any reason to be offended with this language. One must perhaps say on this subject, something like what a famous orthodox man said with regard to the subjects of *Grace*; *One must preach like an Arminian, and believe like a Calvinist*; so here, one must speak with the Unitarians, and believe with the orthodox. Who does not see, however, whither sentiments of this kind lead!

To conclude, what shows the little foundation that this distinction hath, which they employ in order to accommodate those passages which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to his Father, is that the ancient Fathers, even the most orthodox of them, never made use of it. They took a different way to answer these passages; they owned that Jesus Christ, considered even as God, was in some respects subordinate to his Father; that as it was from him he derived his being, in this regard he depended in some measure on his Father;—in this respect he might say *My Father is greater than I*. Several also of the most zealous divines for the Trinity employ this expedient, to answer the difficulties which are proposed to them, and do not apply to all sorts of passages the distinction I have been examining.

*From Abauzit's Essays, in Sparks' Collection.*

#### TRINITARIANS!!

*Though there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be Gods many & Lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we by him.* 1 Cor. viii. 5. 6.

No language could express the belief of Unitarians more fully than this does; and we cannot conceive how fair-minded Trinitarians can evade its evidence. They think they find proof in the scriptures of the deity of the Son and Holy Ghost, and therefore profess to believe that the one God exists in a three-fold distinction, denominated the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost. Of course, they cannot believe these three to be each one precisely the same as either of the others; for in that case, there could be no room for the distinctions supposed to subsist in the God-

head. We will not venture to say, they believe the Son to be the Father or the Holy Ghost; for they expressly assert that these are three distinct persons.

Let them then candidly attend to the language of the text at the head of this article. 'There be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth, but to us there is but *one God*,' who is he? what is his name? "the FATHER"! Now what do Trinitarians say to this? If the words had been, unto us there is but one God—Jehovah, we should expect to be told that in Jehovah are three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But what Trinitarians can say to the passage as it stands, we know not. Surely they will not have the face to say that in the Father are the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; for this would be saying that one of the three distinct persons of the Godhead embraced the other two from which he is distinct. Which would be indeed "confusion worse confounded."

FROM THE LIBERAL RECORDER.

*Continued from page 99.*

Col. ii. 9—"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead, bodily." St. Paul prays that the Ephesians "may be filled with all the fulness of God." Whatever is meant by the fulness of the godhead, it was not originally his own, but was given him. Col. i. 19, "It pleased the father, that in him should all fulness dwell."

1. Tim. iii. 16—"Without controversy, great is the Mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified by the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." God is here applied, in an exalted sense, to our Saviour; for can it be said of the holy just and true God, the justifier of believers, that he was justified in the spirit?—Or of him that dwelleth in light inaccessible, that he was received up into glory? Christ was manifest in the flesh, &c. points in which christians generally agree.

Heb. i. 3—"Being the brightness of his (God's) glory, and the express image of his person." If this proves the deity of Christ, will not the following prove the same of men in general? 1 Cor. xi. 7, "For a man ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and Glory of God."

*To be Continued.*



THE EXTENT OF THE REFORMATION IN THE  
16TH CENTURY.

GREAT research and close reflection are necessary to enable any one to form a correct judgement of the extent of the reformation of the 16th century, and duly to appreciate the efforts of its authors. To form right opinions of the characters of the reformers, and to estimate the real merit of their labors, we must take into view the circumstances of their education, the customs and habits of the age in which they lived, and the disadvantages under which they acted. Take Luther as the great example. In an age comparatively dark, he so far enlightened his own mind as to perceive the corruptions, the abuses, and the impositions of the Church of which he had been a devoted member.—Being himself a priest of eminence, he participated in the emoluments of the hierarchy, and yet he had the honesty to proclaim the domination, the venality and wickedness of the pretended vicegerent of Christ, and the holy universal Church. Though all the authority and all the vengeance of the Roman empire and of the Papal throne were combined for his destruction, yet he persisted resolutely in his defence of Christian liberty and Christian truth; and by the blessing of God, he triumphed over all opposition. His name is identified in every country with the reformed religion, and will be venerated and esteemed in every subsequent age, by all who prize religious freedom, and set a value on religious privileges.

"Martin Luther's life," says bishop Atterbury, "was a continued warfare. He was engaged against the united forces of the Papal world, and he stood the shock of them bravely, both with courage and success. He was a man certainly of high endowments of mind and great virtues. He had a vast understanding, which raised him to a pitch of learning unknown to the age in which he lived. His knowledge in scripture was admirable, his elocution manly, and his way of reasoning, with all the subtlety that the plain truths he delivered would bear. His thoughts were bent always on great designs, and he had a resolution to go through with them, and the assurance of his mind was not to be shaken or surprised. His life was holy, and, when he had leisure for retirement, severe. His virtues were active chiefly, and social, and not those lazy sullen ones of the cloister. He had no ambition but in the service of God;

for other things, neither his enjoyments nor wishes ever went higher than the bare conveniences of living. If, among this crowd of virtues, a failing crept in, we must remember that an apostle himself had not been irreproachable: if, in the body of his doctrine, a flaw is to be seen, yet the greatest lights of the Church, and in the purest times of it, were, we know, not exact in all their opinions.—Upon the whole, we have certainly great reason to break out in the language of the prophet, and say, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth glad tidings."

Every man who has independence enough to form his religious opinions on the result of examination, and openly to confess the articles of his belief—who feels an interest in the rights of conscience, and finds satisfaction in the quiet worship of his God, according to the dictates of his own mind, will ever hold the reformers in the highest estimation, and embalm their memories with the incense of gratitude. But it must be remembered that they were fallible men. They made no claims to inspiration. They lived in an age of great ignorance. Science and literature were then but rising from the state of the deepest depression; and their means of general information were very limited. In religion they had been educated in all the superstitions of the Romish Church, and entered into active life with unbounded notions of Papal power, and with an almost sacred reverence for the decisions of the Church. Under circumstances like these, is it a reasonable supposition that they should at once rise above the prejudices of early education, eradicate the errors that had been the most deeply rooted in their minds, surmount the embarrassments which impeded their progress in the pursuit of truth, and in the course of a few years comprehend Christianity in all its doctrines, precepts and motives? No. We might as well expect that in one season every vestige of an extended forest would, by the labor of an individual, be removed, and in its place would appear all the fruits of the most perfect cultivation. Hear what Luther says of himself, in an address to those who might peruse his works.—"I entreat you to read my writings with cool consideration, and even with much pity. I wish you to know that when I began the affair of indulgences, I was a monk, and a most mad Papist. So intoxicated was I, and drenched in Papal dogmas, that I would have been most ready



at all times to murder, or assist in murdering any person, who should utter a syllable against the Pope. I was always earnest in defending doctrines I professed. I went seriously to work, as one who had a horrible dread of the day of judgement, and who from his inmost soul was anxious for his salvation. You will find, therefore, in my earliest writings, with how much humility, on many occasions, I gave up considerable points to the Pope, which I now detest as blasphemous and abominable in the highest degree. This error my slanderers may call inconsistency; but you, my pious readers, will have the kindness to make some allowance, on account of the times, and my own inexperience. I stood absolutely alone at first, and certainly was very unlearned, and very unfit to undertake matters of such vast importance. It was by accident, not willingly or by design, that I fell into those violent disputes. God is my witness."

That the reformers, under all the embarrassments of their situation, should have broken asunder so many of the cords of Papal thralldom, and corrected so many of the abuses and errors of the Romish Church, must ever astonish the world; but to bound the reformation where they left it, and to make them the standards of orthodoxy in every subsequent age is preposterous.

Dr. Bancroft.

#### THE CONDITIONS OF SALVATION.

It has been already remarked in a former number, that the blessing which it was the great design of Christianity to confer, is represented not merely to be piety, but also the results of piety—happiness, the divine favor, &c. It is in this last character, that we are now to consider the means of obtaining this blessing. What are the means of obtaining happiness? What are the conditions of gaining the favor of God? i. e. his approbation and his forgiveness? Now whether we consult our own reason, or the word of God, we cannot hesitate one moment about the answer. Through all time, through all the forms and changes of being, the one eternal, immutable condition of happiness and the divine favor, is rectitude. In proportion as any creature possesses this, he will be happy; in such proportion God will approve him, will forgive him, and in no other proportion. Such is the uniform language of reason, of nature, of scripture. And thus we find, that, in our

sacred writings, every christian virtue and excellence is at one time or another, enumerated as the condition of salvation—the indispensable condition—for how can any one be happy, or be an object of the divine approbation if destitute of either?

There are two questions however, plain as the subject may thus seem to be, which require some attention. Why, if we are saved, made happy, by our own virtues through the merciful influence and interposition of God, why are we said to be saved by *grace*, and not by works? And why, if rectitude, if purity of mind does in the highest sense constitute our salvation—if we are saved but in proportion as we are sanctified—if sanctification, if holiness is our salvation, why has *faith* such a pre-eminence in this concern? We might be apt to think that obeying had a better title to this distinction than believing.

With regard to the first of these questions, every difficulty is removed, if we consider that the apostles are speaking not of *means*, but of *merits*—not of what we must do to be saved, but of the question whether we can *deserve* to be saved. And on this point they are very explicit and earnest. On the ground of justice, they maintain that we cannot be saved; that we cannot claim happiness as strictly due to our obedience; that we are to rely so far as *merit* is concerned on the mere mercy of God. And yet so far as the *means* of happiness or salvation are concerned, we are none the less to rely on our own character, in a humble dependence on the aid and mercy of God.

There is really no disagreement in these ideas. Happiness is the result of virtue.—God has made it so. We speak but the language of his laws, therefore, when we say, that virtue must save us. But present virtue cannot atone for past transgression. If strict justice takes place, we must still suffer. We deserve to suffer, even the best and holiest. But God deals with us in measures more lenient. He graciously forgives our past transgressions if we repent, and lead lives of stricter obedience.

In the next place, we have to notice the singular importance that is assigned to *faith* as a means of salvation—an importance, which has led many, as they could see no other reason for it, to ascribe to this virtue some mysterious efficacy. Hence many books have been written to set forth its mystical and marvellous qualities, ascribing to faith a virtue entirely distinct from religious character and altogether



er superior to it, boasting of its triumph over that tame and common-place way of gaining happiness and the favor of God—by being pious and holy—attributing to it the power of making that true when believed, which was not true before and could not have been true otherwise. Books have been written upon this subject, which their readers must needs consider as treating of deep mysteries, since that only can save them from the charge of more profound absurdities.

Some reason, however—since we do not admit that the great leading condition of salvation is either a mystery or an absurdity—some reason it is natural to ask for the pre-eminence of faith. Is it intrinsically better, than the other christian graces, that it has this dignity? Is it better than love, or forgiveness, or humility? Is it better than obedience? Rather is it not essentially the same thing? No attentive reader of the new Testament can doubt that it is. The Ethiopian said to Philip as they passed along, "See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" He thus declared his belief in Christianity. But the teacher was anxious to know whether this was a genuine, saving faith; and said "if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest." Thus he required an inward virtue corresponding to the outward profession, a feeling, an affection, a principle in accordance with the speculative assent of the mind. And thus evident is it that faith is virtue; and that its grand excellence is an inward disposition—the excellence of every virtue. Faith then has no intrinsic superiority over other parts of the Christian character.

Its distinction, therefore, must be owing to something external to itself—to circumstances. And these are exceedingly obvious. There was a new religion proposed, and the first and natural requisition would be faith in it. And again, the avowal of such faith, at the hazard of ignominy, injury and death, was a decisive indication of sincere piety. To ascertain whether a man were a real christian, in that day, it was enough to ask, is he a believer? Hence faith came to be the comprehensive and common term for piety and the leading condition of acceptance with God.



D.

TO THE CANDID ORTHODOX.

THERE is no charge more frequently alleged against Unitarians than that, they expect to save themselves by their own good works, and place no dependence on the Grace of God.

This is utterly false. But the orthodox, confident upon this as upon every other point, perversely shut their ears to our most explicit declarations, and to the plainest statements we make of our real opinions upon this subject.

We should think the *absurdity* of such a charge would deter them from repeating it. Do they really mean what their words imply, that Unitarians expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven whether God will or no? and that we shall feel under no obligation to his mercy for eternal happiness? We shall presently see who they are that really depend upon the grace of God—and who they are that claim heaven as a right.

"*The Grace of God.*" Do you understand this phrase? Many, we suspect, of those who use this language most frequently, affix no distinct meaning to it, if any meaning at all. From the manner in which the word is used by many, we should suppose they thought Grace to be a sort of charm—a mystical operation by which sinners, without any effort of their own, were to be saved.

Now it should be known, that grace means precisely the same as favor, mercy, blessing.\* And we ask, whoever heard a Unitarian, preach or pray, without hearing from him repeated and fervent acknowledgements of the favor, the mercy, i. e. the grace of God, and earnest supplications for more of the same in order to our salvation? But do the orthodox, any more than Unitarians, expect to obtain the favor of God without seeking it? This would be a fatal error. But we will not charge them with it; for perhaps we differ not as to the fact that *we must seek* the favor of God, but as to the way in which we are to seek it.

Unitarian preachers exhort their hearers to repentance, a pure heart and a holy life, as the means of obtaining the mercy, the favor, i. e. the grace of God, by which only we can be saved. And in this they follow precisely the example of Christ and his Apostles, who uniformly promised remission of sins to their hearers, upon condition of their repentance and "doing works meet for repentance."

Orthodox preachers insist more upon faith. And never did a Unitarian plume himself so much upon his *morality*, as Calvinists plume themselves upon their *faith*. But will they

\*Unitarians use favor, mercy, blessing, more than grace, because, though this latter word means precisely the same as the former words, it is so often used by others in a mystical sense.



maintain that the faith, which believes in the mercy of God through the redemption of Jesus Christ, will justify, unless it be accompanied by the graces of the christian character? unless it evince its existence by a correspondent life? If this is their doctrine, they are false and dangerous teachers! But if, when the orthodox declare faith to be the means of obtaining the grace of God, they intend to imply not only the assent of the mind to the truths of the gospel, but also that purity and holiness, to which a genuine faith in those truths must lead; if this is their meaning, they differ not in essence from Unitarian preachers, who urge the cultivation of those affections, and the practice of those virtues, which indicate the existence and are the necessary fruits of genuine faith in the doctrines of the gospel, and can never be produced without that faith. Allowing however that in this respect the preaching of the orthodox and Unitarians, may in the end, amount to the same thing, still the mode which Unitarians have adopted is manifestly better; it is both more scriptural and more safe. When faith only is enjoined, people are in danger of contenting themselves with *mere belief*; but when the virtues and graces and spirit of Christ, are declared to be requisite, and his spotless example is held up to the imitation of those, who would be his disciples and obtain the grace of God, there is less danger that hearers will rest satisfied with any thing but evangelical goodness.

One remark further and we have done.—Not only is the doctrine of Grace, then, a doctrine of Unitarianism, but it is utterly inconsistent with the opposite system. A prominent doctrine of orthodoxy is, that the death of Christ paid the debt of sin—satisfied divine justice. If this be the case, we certainly may claim exemption from the consequences of sin, *as a right*,—unless we can believe God to be so unjust, as to require the payment of a debt, which has already been discharged; and to punish us for sins which have already been atoned for by the precious blood of Christ.

Who then most deserve to be charged with not depending for their salvation upon the *grace of God*!

#### WHAT DO CHRISTIANS CONTEND ABOUT?

THE controversies, that chiefly agitate the community, are concerning the *person of Christ*—the subject of the *divine favor*—and

the article of *church government*. But what is the specific matter of disputation? Not whether *Christ* has actually appeared on earth to introduce a new dispensation; nor whether God is disposed to shew *grace* or favor towards fallen man; nor whether the professors of religion ought to submit themselves to certain regulations, or *church government*, for mutual benefit. These are truths revered by every denomination, and the only point of contention has been, what *particular views* are to be entertained of these interesting facts. The Trinitarian, the Arian and the Socinian, equally acknowledge the *divinity* of Christ's mission, or that he was the Messiah predicted by the ancient prophets; and the chief point of dispute is, whether this Messiah be a man highly inspired—or one of the angelic order—or a being possessed of the attributes of Deity. The Calvinist, the Arminian, and the Baxterian also, each of them firmly believes that *the grace of God hath appeared*, and differ only respecting the wideness of its extent, and the mode of its communication. Similar observations might be transferred to the subject of church government, and the administration of ceremonies. But sufficient has been said to shew, that the differences subsisting between Christians *do not effect the truth of Christianity, nor hazard the salvation of mankind.*

*Evans' Sketch.*

#### ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

THE love of God is the main spring of all the duties of the christian life. We attribute to God's love to us, our existence and capacities; all that makes this life a blessing;—all that Christ has done for us; and all for which we hope in heaven. The love we owe to God therefore, necessarily implies that love of Christ and that humble, grateful and affectionate acceptance of him, to which we are called by our religion. It implies a constant regard to the presence, attention to the providence, and submission to the will of God. It implies not alone the obligation of prayer, but that love of communion with God, and that strong sense of the privilege and honor of intercourse with him, which will make it indispensable to our happiness. It implies the highest estimation of the opportunities we have as christians, to worship him daily in secret, and in our families; and to join with those who meet for his worship on the Sabbath. It implies habitual gratitude for his benefits, and an unreserved trust in



the wisdom and goodness of all his appointments. I might even say, that the love of God implies universal obedience; for our religion makes it the first principle of all obligation; the life giving principle of every personal and social virtue, as well as of every office of devotion. But let us consider it alone, as the beginning and source of the duties we owe immediately to God, and to Christ; and let the appeal be made to conscience, what changes would be produced in our hearts and conduct towards God and Christ, by an entire obedience to this single commandment.

If you have this love of God, you delight to think of him, and to feel his presence. But how often do you think of him, and with what emotions? Does the thought of God excite reverence, gratitude, reliance, and a supreme desire of his favor? Do you detain the thought, and cherish it, and rejoice that you have an almighty, an infinitely wise and beneficent Father, to whom you can express all your wants; and in whose service is the present protection, and the eternal security of all who thoroughly love, and faithfully obey him? Let conscience speak, and let it be heard.— You are not, perhaps, wholly unobservant of his presence and providence. But how often do you think of them, and with what emotions? From a consciousness of God's presence, do you feel half that restraint from evil, or half that excitement to duty, which you feel in the presence of an earthly superior? It may be that we are accustomed also to private, and to family prayer. But are ours the prayers of hearts filled with the love of God? Do we feel this great principle of our religion extending its holy influence over our affections and wills, fastening our hearts upon God as the end of desire, and bringing the whole soul to a willing and chosen subjection to his disposal?

Whence is the thoughtless levity of conversation that so much prevails; the irreverent and profane use of the name of God, and of Christ? Whence is it that the Sabbath is by some appropriated, almost equally as other days, to worldly concerns; that the neglect of public worship is justified, even by the most trivial excuses; that the obligations of baptism and the Lord's Supper are so feebly felt, and so easily disregarded? Whence is it that, by some, not one hour of the week is given to God's word; and that it is read by those of us who profess to make it our rule of life, with such infrequency, and with so little sensibility? All these inquiries we may an-

swer in one word. It is because of the *coldness* of our love of God. The strength of our affections is given to the objects of our worldly passions. We are trusting that God will accept us in an observance of the forms, even while we are destitute of the spirit of religion. Or we are relying on his mercy, almost without even an external compliance with the conditions on which it is offered.— Suppose then that the love of God should become the first, and all pervading principle of our hearts. There would not then be an individual, whose secret prayers would not daily rise as sweet incense to heaven. There would not be a house, in which the morning and evening sacrifice of family prayer would not be offered. And how fervent and pure would be these devotions; and how much of the spirit of heaven would they excite and exercise in the hearts that presented them! If God were so loved by us, with what joy would the sabbath be hailed by every one! How precious would be its hours at home, for self examination, for private devotion, for reading the scriptures, and for the instruction of our children! And how would the church be thronged with happy worshippers, all prepared with their whole souls to engage in its services! Nor would one believer in our religion refuse to profess his faith, and to cherish the hopes of Christianity at the table of the Lord. And then if the happy spirits above witness the transactions of men, with what holy joy would they bend their eyes, on the seasons of our communion! Here would be every one who is of an age to understand his christian obligations; every heart would be an abode of the spirit of God; every prayer would rise with acceptance; and all would go away justified and blessed. Yes, in the exaltation and strength which this single principle would give to our piety, and in the holy influence it would exert over every emotion and desire of our hearts, it would produce among us a most glorious and happy *revival* of religion. And does not a consideration of what we should thus be, and a conviction of what we are, not only suggest, but most forcibly bring before our mind, causes of deep humiliation, and excitements to godly sorrow? We should be humbled in the feeling, that we have no more of the love of God in us; we should pray, that this love may be shed abroad in our hearts by the holy spirit, that we may be excited to all those offices of piety here which are so essential to our qualification for the service and enjoyment of him hereafter.

*To be Continued.*